



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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Dear Mr Leckie

Consultation on proposed Woodland Management Plan 2027-2037 - Castle Howard Estate

Thank you for consulting the Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT). The Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) is a member organisation of the Gardens Trust (GT), the Statutory Consultee regarding any proposed development that could affect a site included by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks & Gardens (RPG) – in this case Castle Howard at Grade I. YGT works in partnership with the GT in respect of the protection and conservation of registered sites.

This response for the proposed Woodland Management Plan is from YGT.

We understand that the proposed renewed Woodland Management Plan 2027-2037 (WMP) for the Castle Howard Estate has been prepared to guide the sustainable management of the woodlands over the next 10 years and beyond. The proposed management focuses on PAWS (Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites), restoration, ecological connectivity and functioning, climate resilience and a wider use of Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) methods.

The parkland, pleasure grounds and gardens of Castle Howard are registered at Grade I indicating that it is an RPG of exceptional interest and of international importance as an example of the 'Heroic Age' of English Garden History (Christopher Hussey). It is a designed landscape of monumental scale developed from c.1678 and decisively important for the development of the English Landscape Style from the mid-18th Century. Horace Walpole commented following a visit in 1772 that Castle Howard presented 'the grandest scenes of rural magnificence' which allowed him to see 'at one view... a palace, a town, a fortified city, temples on high places, woods worthy of being each a metropolis of the Druids, the noblest lawn on earth fenced by half the horizon, and a mausoleum that would tempt one to be buried alive'. It is understood and appreciated at landscape scale. The Vistas and Views across the parkland and out into the surrounding landscape (borrowing views) are crucial to the overall design intent and appreciation.

I have consulted conservation colleagues in YGT, and we offer the following comments:

The Plan seems well developed from an ecological perspective. We support the overall long-term vision that includes resilience to the changing climate and note biodiversity, ecological functioning, quality timber, access and low impact silvicultural activities to be at the core of all management

decisions. However, we are very surprised to see no explicit mention of the 18th C parkland nor Castle Howard's significant pleasure grounds, apart from Ray Wood. As mentioned above, and as you will appreciate, the Vistas and Views are crucial and extensive at Castle Howard and can be 'lost' or reduced by insensitive planting and unmanaged tree growth. We are particularly surprised that the 18th C parkland is not mentioned after all the management planning and related work that has been done at Castle Howard over the last 15-20 years. For example, the section on the built historic environment appears to only cover scheduled monuments and listed buildings. The overall design intent and significance of Castle Howard is so much more. We consider this to be a major omission which must be corrected.

The WMP extends well beyond the formal registered area for the site but includes many of the areas of borrowed views. The woodland is rightly acknowledged of importance for ecological issues but also needs to be understood in the context of the historic design intent and this should be recognised in the Plan.

A particular concern is the lack of reference to the 2008 Parkland Conservation Management Plan funded by Historic England and devised and written with the support of key local and national partners including Natural England. It references ecological considerations and woodland management throughout and has recommendations for woodland management to enhance the historic features of the park. This should be referenced in the new WMP.

Similarly, a 2016 Garden Outline Management Plan prepared by the Landscape Agency includes detailed commentary and recommendations for tree works which would benefit this crucial core area of historic assets. It would seem essential that the recommendations contained in this are included. This flags well how trees have become outgrown and led to the loss of definition of key historic views and visual connectivity between historic features.

There is no specific reference to the importance of Lime trees within the Plan. These were the key component of the early design; used specifically to create the avenues which were a crucial element of the original design and remain so clearly visible today. Some are ancient and retain SSSI quality saproxylic insects and beetles and require very careful management to retain such ecologically important invertebrates and their habitat. The avenues were the subject of detailed management assessment and planning some 10 years ago as an element of the Higher Level Agri-Environment Scheme. Related works on the main avenues, also funded under this scheme, helped revitalise these also providing a strategy for their future long- term management. It is hoped that these recommendations are still being followed. All of this should be reflected in the new WMP.

Reference is made to ancient trees and the need for an inventory and targeted management of these trees. The armada oaks in the present car park area are perhaps the most visible of the ancient trees. These have long been managed as veteran trees with works to their above ground growth and also root protection zones. These could be better managed as exemplars, but this isn't explicitly referenced in the plan at all.

Ray Wood is flagged as home to a designed botanical collection created in the 1970's. However, Ray Wood is also an early informal design probably by Stephen Switzer (1682-1745) as a form of Wilderness Garden. We have not found any reference to this; decisively important for the development of the English Landscape Style. Whilst above ground trace of this early design has been lost there must remain possibility of below-ground survival of elements of the original design - perhaps planting holes and evidence for early path lines. Management of this area needs to be sensitive to the later pleasure garden but also sympathetic to any surviving remains of the earlier phases.

Whilst we appreciate the Castle Howard estates natural environment work ('rewilding'), we are aware that overall, many of the trees and woodland areas have a crucial and symbiotic relationship with the 18th C design and built features. It should, with more detailed consideration and referencing, be possible to manage both together to meet modern 21st Century integrated conservation standards.

The WMP needs to reference throughout the need for these linked aims and objectives to be addressed.

Given Historic England's long and detailed engagement with the site it is assumed that they will be fully consulted on the plan. We hope that Natural England has also been consulted.

Yours sincerely

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Trustee Conservation and Planning

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